JUVENILE JUSTICE

in California

2005



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CRIMINAL JUSTICE STATISTICS CENTER

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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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under law

The role of the Criminal Justice Statistics Center is to:

- Collect, analyze, and report statistical data which provide valid measures of crime and the criminal justice process.
- Examine these data on an ongoing basis to better describe crime and the criminal justice system.
- *Promote the responsible presentation and use of crime statistics.*

Contents

Mission Statement	ii
Introduction	2
Highlights	3
Juvenile Justice System Fallout Chart	5
Data Analysis	9
Population	10
Trends	11
Arrests	17
Referrals	31
Petitions	47
Adult Dispositions	69
Minority Contact	83
Data Tables	89
Appendices	121
1 Background	122
2 Data Limitations	123
3 Penal Code Sections	124
4 Felony-Level Arrest Offense Codes	126
5 Misdemeanor-Level Arrest Offense Codes	128
6 Juvenile Justice Glossary	130

INTRODUCTION

Juvenile Justice in California, 2005 is organized to display the flow of the juvenile justice process and provide specific information on the juvenile population, race/ethnic groups, gender, number of arrests, referrals to probation departments, juvenile court dispositions, offenses, and dispositions for those juveniles tried in adult courts.

The reader should also know that the California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center (CJSC) is required by statute to collect, tabulate, analyze, and interpret data that describe the administration of juvenile justice in California. To aid in the collection of data, Welfare and Institutions Code section 285 provides that "All probation officers shall make periodic reports to the Attorney General" Penal Code section 13012 subdivision (d) requires CJSC to include the administrative actions taken by law enforcement, prosecutorial, judicial, penal, and correctional agencies in the juvenile justice system. Penal Code section 13012.5 also requires the inclusion of fitness hearing information and outcomes, direct filings in adult criminal court, and the outcomes of those cases involving minors who are prosecuted in adult criminal courts, in the annual report to the Legislature.

This report is based on data submitted by 55 of California's 58 county probation departments representing approximately 92 percent of the state's population. Of the remaining three counties, Del Norte and Sierra were unable to provide any data, while Riverside only provided partial data for 2005. Therefore, the data from these counties are not included in this report.

The presentation of data in this report is organized to display the flow of the juvenile justice process. Each section examines the relevant data as follows:

- Arrests by gender, age, race/ethnic group, offense, and disposition.
- Referrals by gender, age, race/ethnic group, offense, and disposition.
- Petitions by gender, age, race/ethnic group, offense, and disposition.
- Adult dispositions by gender, age, race/ethnic group, offense, and disposition.
- Minority contact by race/ethnic group.

The subjectivity of the classification and labeling process must be considered in the analysis of race/ethnic group data. As commonly used, race refers to large populations that share certain similar physical characteristics such as skin color. Because these physical characteristics can vary greatly within groups as well as between groups, determination of race is frequently, by necessity, subjective. Ethnicity refers to cultural heritage and can cross racial lines. For example, the ethnic designation "Hispanic" includes persons of any race. Most commonly, self identification of race/ethnicity is used in the classification and labeling process.

Comparisons between 2002 and 2005 data are presented in this report at key decision points in the juvenile justice process; i.e., law enforcement, probation department, and juvenile court. Comparisons at all points in the process or for all data are not presented because of changes in the number of reporting probation departments and changes in the number of reportable offenses. In 2002, only the most serious offenses were reported; in 2005, up to five offenses could be reported.

The offenses presented in this report were grouped into the categories of person, property, drug, public order, and status offenses. The use of these categories is intended to provide a valid and comparable measure of offenses and the juvenile justice process.

■ This logo, which appears repeatedly throughout the report, will alert the reader to featured analyses or items of special interest.

HIGHLIGHTS

ARRESTS

In 2005, of the juveniles arrested, almost two-thirds were arrested for a misdemeanor offense (60.0 percent), another quarter were arrested for a felony offense (26.5 percent), and the remainder (13.4 percent) were status offense arrests. (Source: Table 1.)

In 2005, eight out of ten arrested juveniles (80.3 percent) were referred to county juvenile probation departments for appropriate handling. (Source: Table 1A.)

REFERRALS

Of the total juveniles referred to county probation departments, over one-half (50.8 percent) resulted in a petition being filed to have the case handled formally by the juvenile court. (Source: Table 2.)

Over one-third (35.1 percent) of the juvenile cases referred to county probation departments were closed at intake, indicating no further action was taken. (Source: Table 2.)

PETITIONS

Of the juveniles handled formally by the juvenile court, the majority (63.5 percent) were made a ward of the court. (Source: Table 4.)

Nearly one-fifth (19.2 percent) of the petitions filed to have a juvenile handled formally by the juvenile court were dismissed. (Source: Table 4.)

ADULT DISPOSITIONS

Of the juvenile dispositions in adult court that resulted in a conviction, nearly two-thirds were sentenced to prison (64.6 percent). (Source: Table 13.)

MINORITY CONTACT

When comparing the rate of transfers to adult court by race/ethnic group, blacks and Hispanics exceeded whites by more than three to one (4.70 and 3.44, respectively). (Source: Table 15.)

Juvenile Justice System, 2005 Fallout Chart

The juvenile justice system in California differs from the adult system in the type of offenders received and the manner in which they are processed. The juvenile system primarily deals with persons under 18 years of age who have either violated criminal statutes or have committed "status offenses." Status offenses are acts that are offenses only when committed by a juvenile, such as incorrigibility, truancy, running away, and curfew violations.

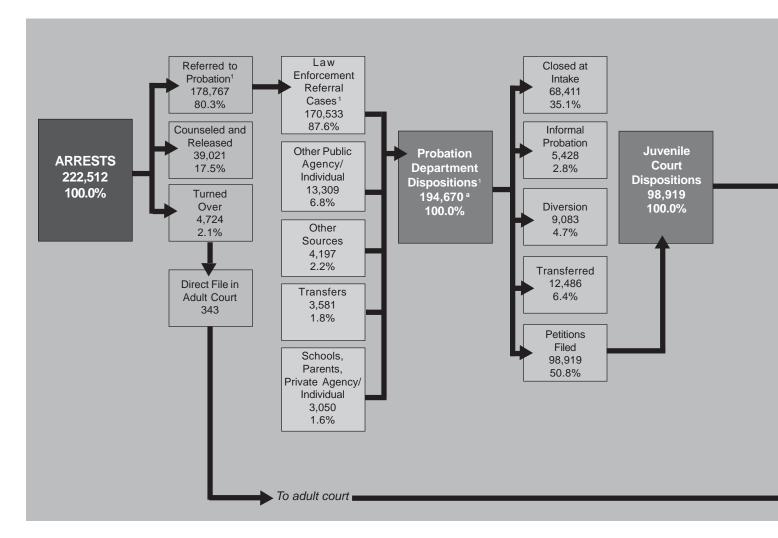
Arrests of law violators and status offenders are received from law enforcement agencies throughout California. The law enforcement agency may refer the juvenile to the probation department, counsel and release, or turn the juvenile over to another law enforcement jurisdiction. The law enforcement agency, given the severity of the crime, may refer the juvenile offender to the District Attorney for direct filing in adult court.

Referrals of law violators and status offenders to probation departments are from law enforcement, other public agencies or individuals, other sources, transfers from other counties or states, or from schools, parents, or private agencies or individuals.

The accompanying fallout chart depicts the path of a juvenile through the juvenile justice system in California from arrest to final disposition, including the outcomes of juvenile cases transferred to the adult system for prosecution.

See Chart ->

FIGURE 1 **JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM, 2005 FALLOUT CHART**



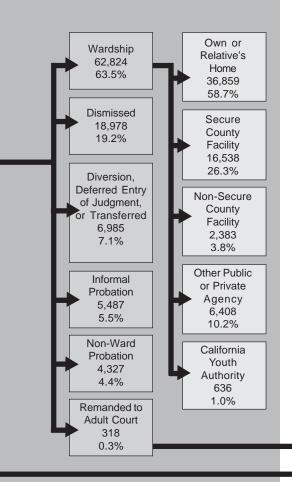
Source: Tables 1, 2, 4, and 13.

Note: Percentages may not equal 100.0 due to rounding.

¹The arrest data are reported by law enforcement agencies, whereas law enforcement referral data are reported by probation departments. Comparisons between arrest data and referral data should not be made because of differences in the units of count between the two sources. See Appendix 2, page 123, for more detail.

^aIncludes the 343 juveniles sent directly to adult court.

^bIn 2005, probation departments reported information on 661 transfers to the adult system. The adult disposition information being discussed here is for the 422 dispositions received in 2005.



- Typically, referrals are made to the probation department in the juvenile's county of residence. The majority come from police and sheriff's departments (87.6 percent), with the remainder coming from other sources.
- Probation departments decide how to process referred cases. A case may be closed or transferred, a juvenile may be placed on informal probation or in a diversion program, or a petition may be sought for a court hearing.
- Most formal juvenile court hearings resulted in the juvenile being made a ward of the court. Most wards (58.7 percent) were allowed to go home under the supervision of the probation department.
- Juveniles can be transferred to the adult criminal justice system for prosecution by failing a fitness hearing in the juvenile court or sent directly by the District Attorney. More than eight out of ten dispositions received in 2005 resulted in a conviction (83.6 percent).

